A black and white photograph of Tommy Flanagan, an elderly man with glasses and a mustache, wearing a dark suit and a white shirt. He is seated at a piano, looking down at the keys with a focused expression. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and hands against a dark background.

TOMMY FLANAGAN
PLAYS THE MUSIC OF
HAROLD ARLEN



IC 1071

TOMMY FLANAGAN PLAYS THE MUSIC OF HAROLD ARLEN IC 1071

TOMMY FLANAGAN PLAYS THE MUSIC OF HAROLD ARLEN



Between The Devil and The Deep Blue Sea	5:45
Over The Rainbow	4:20
Sleepin' Bee	6:04
Ill Wind	6:35
Out Of This World	6:30
One For My Baby	3:12
Get Happy	5:11
My Shining Hour	5:15
Last Night When We Were Young*	5:59

Tommy Flanagan, *piano*
 George Mraz, *bass*
 Connie Kay, *drums*
 Helen Merrill, *vocal**

All songs written by Harold Arlen

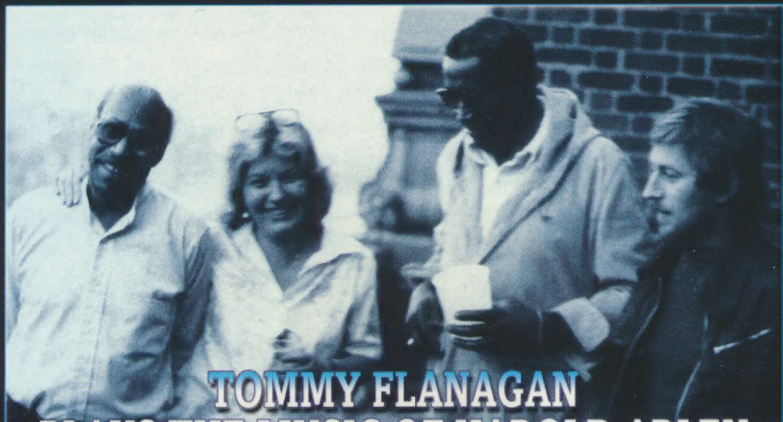
Producer: Helen Merrill/Spicewood Enterprises, Inc.
 Director: Don Brydon • Engineer: David Baker
 Recorded: SNS Productions, New York City

©1980, ©2008
 Inner City Records
 50 Executive Boulevard
 Elmsford, NY 10523-1325




 IC 1071

TOMMY FLANAGAN PLAYS THE MUSIC OF HAROLD ARLEN IC 1071



TOMMY FLANAGAN PLAYS THE MUSIC OF HAROLD ARLEN

Between The Devil and The Deep Blue Sea	5:45
Over The Rainbow	4:20
Sleepin' Bee	6:04
Ill Wind	6:35
Out Of This World	6:30
One For My Baby	3:12
Get Happy	5:11
My Shining Hour	5:15
Last Night When We Were Young*	5:59

Producer: Helen Merrill/Spicewood Enterprises, Inc.
Director: Don Brydon • Engineer: David Baker • Recorded: SNS Productions, New York City

©1980, ©2008 Inner City Records • 50 Executive Boulevard • Elmsford, NY 10523-1325

Tommy Flanagan,
piano
George Mraz,
bass
Connie Kay,
drums
Helen Merrill,
vocal



To the best of my recollection (fortified by information in one of the most reliable discographies), **Tommy Flanagan** did not record as a leader in his own right until 1957. Now that may seem like a very distant date to listeners who were children, or perhaps unborn, during that year; however, in terms of Flanagan's career it signifies a relatively late start since at that point he was 27 years old and had been fairly prominent on the modern jazz scene for about ten years.

By "modern," of course, I do not mean what that term connotes today. As all of us who have been out there watching for a while know, today's modernism can be tomorrow's antique. But Tommy Flanagan was among the first to align himself with the developments that were, by the standards of that time, thoroughly contemporary.

Tommy is a product of Detroit, a city that produced so many jazzmen who would play a vital role in the new developments of the bebop era. His first instrument was the clarinet, but he began studying the piano at the age of 11, and it was not long before he acquired enough professionalism to enable him to play his first gigs.

Among his early associates were such destined-for-greatness Detroiters as Milt Jackson and Lucky Thompson. Another colleague who played a major part in his career was the tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell. Born in Kansas City but later a student at Detroit's Cass Tech., Mitchell led the combo in which Tommy played both before and after his 1951-3 Army service.

Pianists with Tommy's harmonic sensitivity have often been attracted to guitar players; there was evidence of this when in 1954 Flanagan joined Kenny Burrell, and later formed a similarly felicitous partnership with Jim Hall. Early in 1956 Tommy moved permanently to New York, where he became a part of the bustling scene of which Birdland was the epicenter. The jobs were plentiful: with Oscar Pettiford's group; subbing for an intermittent relationship with Ella Fitzgerald that would last off and on for better than two decades and would establish him as one of the most intelligent of accompanists.

For a long while, though, his image was that of a bebopper. He toured for a year with J.J. Johnson, worked for three months with Miles Davis, had his own trio for a while, and in 1959-60 toured with the Harry Sweets Edison Quintet.

The 1960s found him with Coleman Hawkins, but from '63-5 he was back with Ella, in 1966 served as Tony Bennett's musical director, then went to work for Fitzgerald on a full time basis in '68 until a heart attack sidelined him a year or two ago. Since then he has been back on the Manhattan scene doing his own very personal thing, and making such delightful albums as the one you are now inspecting, taped under the auspices of a singer whose vocal qualities are as sensitive and appealing as Tommy's keyboard characteristics, Helen Merrill.

Harold Arlen, whose melodies form the basis of the Flanagan compendium, ranks alongside Ellington and Gershwin as one of the composers most respected and most often recorded by jazz musicians over a half century span. Born in 1905 in Buffalo, N.Y., he was a professional pianist at 15 (as Tommy himself would be). After working as a pit band musician in *George White's Scandals of 1928*, he began composing the following year and had his first hit with *Get Happy*, in Earl Carroll's *Vanities of 1930*.

The endless series of Arlen successes (many of them with lyricist Ted Koehler) provided popular singers and jazz musicians with a great source of material. Flanagan's choices are all long familiar. *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* was introduced by Aida Ward in a 1931 Cotton Club show for which Koehler and Arlen wrote the score. *Over The Rainbow* (1939, with words by Yip Harburg) was of course Judy Garland's timeless wonder in *The Wizard of Oz*.

A Sleepin' Bee (words by Truman Capote and Arlen) was introduced by Diahann Carroll in the 1954 stage show *House of Flowers*. *Ill Wind* is another Cotton Club show product, vintage 1934. *Out Of This World* was sung by Bing Crosby, using Johnny Mercer's lyrics, in a 1945 film by the same name.

One of the most brilliant examples of Arlen's melodic sense and unconventional construction is *One For My Baby*, another Mercer collaboration, which Fred Astaire sang in a 1943 movie, *The Sky's The Limit*. *My Shining Hour* has the identical credits.

Best of all there is the exquisite *Last Night When We Were Young*, for which producer **Helen Merrill** adds a vocal that is understated even by her own uniquely subtle standards. It is hard to imagine a more perfect wedding of singer, song and accompanist. It is also hard to believe that this superb tune, sung by Lawrence Tibbett for a 1963 movie, was deleted before the film was released. It was also cut out of two later films in which Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra sang it. That says something about the taste of the old Hollywood in popular songs.

Tommy Flanagan is in splendid company here. Note how Connie Kay's cymbals ride over the third chorus on *Between The Devil*. The former Modern Jazz Quartet drummer is a model of discretion throughout. George Mraz, the Czech Bassist who has toured with Oscar Peterson, offers the sturdy support for which he has long been noted, and solos splendidly on *Devil, Rainbow* and *Get Happy*.

You will notice that there has been no evaluation of Timmy Flanagan. I could go into elaborate details about the bop influence discernible on the uptempos, the Tatum hints in *Ill Winds*, and so forth; but it is very apparent that Flanagan's interpretations speak for themselves. He has long been called an underrated artist; with the release of albums like this, the rating seems likely at last to draw level with the talent. For this we must thank not only Tommy himself, but also Helen Merrill, the prettiest producer, with the most tasteful of ideas.

-LEONARD FEATHER

These are the liner notes from the original release of this album in 1980.

TOMMY FLANAGAN PLAYS THE MUSIC OF HAROLD ARLEN

48 at the time that he recorded his Harold Arlen tribute album in 1978, Tommy Flanagan had successfully emerged from relative obscurity. Although an important graduate of the Detroit jazz scene of the 1950s and the leader of several rewarding record dates during 1957-61 after moving to New York, Flanagan worked as Ella Fitzgerald's pianist and music director during 1963-65 and 1968-78. While that association gave him the opportunity to work steadily and travel the world, it contributed to him not leading any record dates during 1962-74 and being in danger of being forgotten or, at the least, being taken for granted. While Flanagan headed a few sessions during 1975-77, it was not until he began leading his own trio in 1978 that his recording career blossomed.

One of the most tasteful and consistently inventive of the pianists to emerge from the world of 1950s hard bop, Tommy Flanagan had his own sound within the modern mainstream. The Harold Arlen set found him newly "liberated," and he kept very busy during the 23 years that he had left. In addition to work with his trios, which at times included George Mraz or Peter Washington on bass and such drummers as Al Foster, Kenny Washington or Lewis Nash, there were record dates in which he shared piano duos with Hank Jones and Kenny Barron, and tribute albums to Ella and the songs of Thad Jones..

Tommy Flanagan continued to grow as a soloist without changing his basic approach, being universally recognized as a jazz giant during the two decades before his death at the age of 71 on Nov. 16, 2001.

- SCOTT YANOW, 2008

*Author of ten jazz books including
The Jazz Singers, Jazz On Film
and Jazz On Record 1917-76*

IC 1071

TOMMY FLANAGAN
PLAYS THE MUSIC OF
HAROLD ARLEN



Between The Devil
and The Deep Blue Sea
Over The Rainbow
Sleepin' Bee
Ill Wind
Out Of This World
One For My Baby
Get Happy
My Shining Hour
Last Night When
We Were Young



© 2008 Inner City. All rights reserved.